

The Use of Rodent Environmental Enrichment Devices at the NCI-Frederick

A Notice from the NCI-Frederick Animal Care and Use Committee

As a result of our July 2002 Site Visit by the Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (AAALACi), the NCI-Frederick Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC) was asked to strengthen our current environmental enrichment program. The *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, the standard used to assess quality laboratory animal science programs across the world, states that "acceptable primary enclosures must allow for the normal physiologic and behavioral needs of the animals, including ... normal movement and postural adjustments."¹ AAALACi and the animal welfare organizations have placed emphasis on the use of environmental enrichment devices to ensure that current practices fulfill this guideline.²

Last year the ACUC appointed a subcommittee to look into the possible use of environmental enrichment devices in our animal colonies. After extensive review, the subcommittee came to the following conclusions:

Effective April 2003, all singly housed animals and animals that are housed for greater than 90 days must be provided with an enrichment device*. The type of enrichment device* will be determined by the facility management in conjunction with the investigative staff.

Please keep in mind that for certain studies (e.g., behavioral) the ACUC understands that the use of environmental enrichment devices may provide unwanted variables in your research results. Any studies that do not wish to utilize enrichment devices must provide justification to the ACUC on the Animal Study Proposal Form (a new section will be added to the form). Exclusions for the use of enrichment devices will be made by the ACUC on a case-by-case basis.

Our goal is to promote the well-being of animals utilized at the NCI-Frederick and to ensure that investigators obtain reliable scientific results. The implementation of this program is focused on achieving both of these goals. Please direct any questions or concerns to the ACUC Office (ahaltm@ncifcrf.gov). We appreciate your cooperation with this endeavor.

** Types of enrichment that should be considered: various types of bedding materials, nestlets, disposable igloos, polycarbonate tunnels/tubes, and food treats.*

¹ Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/labrats)

² Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care International (www.aaalac.org)